Negotiating a new social contract for the extractive industries: what is the role of geoscientists?

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Resource industries vs sustainability?
Geoethics at the heart of all geoscience?
Critical minerals to facilitate development

- Improvement in the standard of living of many of the world’s poorest has been driven in large measure by technological development.
- That development has depended on the use of an increasingly wide range of metallic elements.

Source: Nickless (2016), modified from Oberhaensli (2013)
Supply and demand: copper...

Today’s known resources leave a 30 Mt shortfall in 2050 in available supply from primary resources to meet the world’s historical demand trajectory. This requires parallel efforts in:
- new resource discovery, development
- increased recycling
- slowing growth in demand.

Altered priorities ahead...

Source: Klein, 2012
What does a mine look like?
Some ethical considerations

- Safety
- Child labour
- Corruption and tax evasion
- Resource colonialism
- Environmental degradation
- Pollution (and exporting our environmental impacts)
From ‘social licence to operate’ to ‘social contract’

- Localised... atomised... minimal?
- A changing picture
- But what is missing?
17 GOALS TO TRANSFORM OUR WORLD

1. NO POVERTY
2. ZERO HUNGER
3. GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
4. QUALITY EDUCATION
5. GENDER EQUALITY
6. CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
7. AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY
8. DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH
9. INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
10. REDUCED INEQUALITIES
11. SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES
12. RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
13. CLIMATE ACTION
14. LIFE BELOW WATER
15. LIFE ON LAND
16. PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
17. PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS
An opportunity

‘...to bring world attention to the challenges of sustaining resource supplies and to outline a pathway to the future, including a route to nation-building and poverty alleviation through resource development’

A call to mobilise the global geoscience community to address a global challenge – scientific, technical, but also ethical
Towards a new social contract for mining

- Global governance
- A holistic system view
- Political engagement
- Reconnecting consumers with the minerals they use
Reconnecting with the minerals we use

- Raising awareness
- Changing behaviours
- Connecting people with the environmental and social impacts (positive and negative) of winning these resources
- What will work?
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